

Newlands Corner and Pewley Down – Step by Step

Beautiful Surrey countryside, sweeping views, open skies, birds, flowers and good paths

1. From the Newlands Corner, Visitor Centre, café and toilets walk directly across the car park and go down the hill on the marked path which bends to the right through the trees where the path splits. Emerging from the trees on the left side, look downhill for a metre-high marker post and drop down to it. Continue close to the hedge and into the hedgerow. You will quickly reach the gate onto open fields. In spring and summer these fields are alive with skylarks.
2. At the bottom of the valley follow the footpath signs past the cottage and chicken run. At the path junction turn right onto the public bridleway (This is part of The Pilgrim's Way). You will see many bluebells here in late April/early May. Green woodpeckers like the sandy fields with old trees on your right. Look for buzzards and red kites. (When you reach the lane, you have a choice, you can continue straight on and follow the main path past the noticeboards for the steep climb to Saint Martha's church on the hill (see the map – follow the Pilgrim's Way signs). You may miss some of the best natural surroundings but get some historical uplift. Rejoin our path at point 5.
3. If you don't fancy the climb, turn right down to the bottom of the lane where it turns sharply right and take the marked Public Bridleway track through the gate on the left. Do not follow the North Downs Way sign, keep going straight. You will now see wildflowers, some great trees and then signs of traditional hedge laying. I found my first wood anemone of the season here. Much of the land on this section of the walk is owned by Surrey County Council. To your right chalk grasslands have a south facing aspect. These are great places for butterflies, wildflowers and orchids. To your left on the north facing hills, you will see, after a kilometre, some considerable work going on to restore some acid grassland. This is preparation for a SANG designation (compensation recreation land for housebuilding). Rhododendron has been cleared by digging out the roots, cutting at ground level does not enable restoration. This area is being re-seeded with native wildflowers relevant to its location and aspect. (from 2023 for a year or two the valley bottom may be excavated for Thames Water to lay important pipework). Next you reach Tyting Farm and Halfpenny Lane.
4. Cross straight over onto another public bridleway. This is lined with bugloss, wild parsley and red dead nettle. You soon reach a path crossroads, and a huge sign telling you more about Pewley Down. Continue straight on. After a couple of hundred yards, you reach another big path crossroads.
5. Turn right onto the North Downs Way. (if you followed the Pilgrim's Way over Saint Martha's Hill this is the point at which you will rejoin the lower walk). Horses and jackdaws will probably occupy your senses here. Guildford appears on the hill over to your right. When you meet the lane, continue straight on but a parallel woodland path is nice to follow. I found treecreeper here in the Norway spruce trees. You may find a few nice patches of bluebells here also. When the woodland path drops down to the lane with large cut logs at a rough track entrance continue on the lane itself and not in the woodland. The lane soon reaches the free Chancies car park (an alternative starting point for the walk).

6. Turn right along the public footpath with the car park on your left. Join the road and begin to ascend the hill which is Echo Pit Road. This is the steep part of the walk. Continue uphill on Echo Pit Road until you reach Warwick Bench Road going off to the left. Do not turn but continue forward up into Northdown Lane. Follow this lane as far as you can until you reach Eden House and take the path to Pewley Down to the right.
7. Take the diagonal path up and across the field. Cross a wide track and you soon emerge on another track with a bench to rest from your hill climb. Now, crossing the down, pass the memorial to the gift of this land (by The Friary Brewery, later Friary Meux, closed 1973) to the public of Guildford and enjoy the fabulous views across the valley. Follow the long hedgerow across the Down. You can expect to see buzzards, red kites and maybe kestrels hovering here. This ridge attracts birds on migration in the early spring and autumn. There's a good chance of Wheatear and stonechats on the tops of lower bushes and posts. Wildflowers and orchids will be in the grassland with butterflies in summer. Following to the end of the hedgerow and grassland take the path into the trees.
8. A signpost says Burgess Way. On your right is a thin, scrub, hedgerow and on your left a strip of mainly beech woodland. On my walks, I found this path a nicely sheltered place away from the wind. I found the fungus called King Alfred's Cakes along this path. Soon the garden fences to a few properties appear on your right-hand side. Further on you will meet a lane and continue going in the same direction.
9. At the crossroads continue straight into White Lane. This is narrow but traffic is usually quite light and after a while there's a narrow roadside path on your right. In spring, you'll find primroses here. A little lane appears on your left, going up to a reservoir. Ignore this and continue along the road. When you reach the house called Whiteways Lodge a strong path opposite enters the woodland.
10. Turn right on this path. This will now lead you all the way to Newlands Corner. You pass through a widening area of mixed woodland, mainly beech, many lovely old yew trees and plenty of holly. You can expect to find all our common birds here, including chiffchaffs, blackcaps, goldcrests and song thrushes. I also found several marsh tit here, a declining species. What is slightly puzzling is that the moss on the trees seems to be mainly on the southside. This is normally a feature of woodland in the southern hemisphere but moss will grow anywhere where it's dark and damp. So, in winter these woodlands, are likely to be very cool and damp. Brimstone butterflies are to be seen in March. Newlands Corner has a takeaway café, visitor centre and public toilets.

If you started at Pewley Down continue your walk from 1. above.